

... of William College, Princeton Theological Seminary, and Yale University. He served as a missionary to China, 1947-1951, and to Korea, 1955-1981. He is presently the Henry Winters Luce Professor of Ecumenics and Mission at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Commencement Address, 1985

Text: *"Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" . . . Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe." Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless but believing." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." (John 11:11-16, 14:1-5, 20:24-29)*

THIS DAY belongs to the Class of 1985. Your program says this is the 173rd Annual Commencement. That is true. But in fact the tradition goes back farther than that, back to before the college and seminary were separated, as the figure of John Witherspoon up there in the stained glass window on my left reminds us. He is in the lower corner, black gown and white Geneva tabs. It was as president of the college that Witherspoon signed my great-great-grandfather's diploma in the class of

1774 and sent him out into the ministry 211 years ago. The next year, 1775, Witherspoon's baccalaureate address was so good, he thought, that he repeated the same address for the next ten graduations running, according to his biographer. Every ministry has its flaws. The next year, 1776, he redeemed himself in a larger sense. He became the only member of the clergy to sign the Declaration of Independence.

But you will need something more than the Princeton tradition to sus-

tain you in your ministry, and John Witherspoon is not my subject. I have made a reckless choice, and I've picked an unusually improbable model for ministry to propose to you: the Apostle Thomas, though Thomas is a little hard to defend as a model of anything—except perhaps doubt, or pessimism, or dissent, and, if an older tradition than ours can be believed, of foot dragging and embezzlement. So why Thomas? Why not John? So much more pious. Or Peter the Rock? Or Andrew the evangelist? Or James the letter-writer, who may not have been an apostle but who could be a great model for praxis ministry.

Why St. Thomas? Thomas is about as unlikely an example of sainthood as the Bible gives us. Perhaps that is why three of the gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, tell us nothing about him but his name, as if they thought it better to maintain a discreet silence about this unpredictable colleague of theirs who was anything but a blameless pattern for devout Christians.

Only John dares to tell it like it is. Take the day Jesus decided to go back into Judaea because his friend Lazarus was sick. John says the disciples begged him not to go. He would be killed. But Jesus insisted. You would think that then they would lay aside their fears and follow him gladly. Real disciples are supposed to bubble over with courage and confidence and commitment. Like Paul, "If God be for us, who can be against us!" But not Thomas. He sees his Lord heading for certain death and thinks to himself, this is the end. "All right, let's all go and

die with him," he says (John 11). The complete pessimist.

Another time, Jesus is talking with his disciples: "In my father's house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you . . . and where I go ye know and the way you know." Those are among the most beautiful words in the whole Bible. We read them at funerals. They are sacred. But not to Thomas. Nothing is sacred to that unreconstructed rebel. He rudely interrupts the sermon; flatly contradicts the master to his face. "We do *not* know where you are going. How can we know the way?" (John 14). Why did Jesus pick *him* as a minister? What happened to the screening process? The dossiers?

Well, I still have some things to suggest you might remember about Thomas as you enter your own ministry—some lessons he learned that made him fit at last to be called a minister and apostle of Jesus Christ.

I Belief (Faith)

The first lesson was belief. His ministry was paralyzed until he learned to believe. In the school of the apostles, in seminary as it were, Thomas was a doubter. You know the story. "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails . . . and place my hands in his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). His ministry was big enough for a human Jesus, but too small for a Risen Lord. Yet it is basic to the gospel in the New Testament that a good news without the resurrection is no good news at all.

We are all of us at times, I think, followers of Thomas the doubter.

Doubts come and doubts will go. We need not be ashamed of them. Doubt is not the opposite of faith. The opposite of faith is rejection, which is very different. In fact, as many have pointed out, doubt can lead an honest doubter to the truth. That is precisely how Jesus used Thomas' doubt. We need not hide our doubts. But neither should we glamorize them. Academic circles tend to idealize doubt as a sign of intellectual maturity. It is not. Held too long in the Christian life, doubt is more often a mark of spiritual impotence.

It was not doubt that finally made Thomas an apostle. It was faith, a faith founded on the stunning discovery that it was reasonable to believe. He broke through out of the tight, paralyzing world of his very human doubts into God's real, large world of faith and resurrection power. He broke through rather clumsily, by touch. Jesus himself said there are better ways. Christian faith is reasonable, but it comes more naturally by trust and reason, than by doubt and touch. But Thomas needed the touch, and the turning point in his life was when he saw in the body of the Risen Lord the marks of the suffering Jesus he thought he had lost. "My Lord and my God." It was a cry of confession that changed more than his ministry. It changed Thomas.

II *Obedience*

But not everything changed. According to the legend, Thomas had not changed enough. He believed, but he was not yet ready to obey. What we know about him in this respect traces back to a delightfully

apocryphal but very ancient document called *The Acts of Thomas*. As history it is painfully unreliable. I have used it in classes, but always with a warning about the difference between history and tradition. This is tradition, a story from the early church of the east, about 200 A.D. perhaps. It is full of fantasy, yet is remarkably faithful in its picture of Thomas' character, to what we know of him in the New Testament. Besides, ancient traditions often contain kernels of truth, even more history, sometimes, than we can presently prove.

Anyway, *The Acts of Thomas* opens with the eleven disciples trying to decide how to obey the Lord's last command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel." Sensibly, they began by dividing up the world into eleven parts, one for each disciple, and then, as their custom was, they cast lots for the assignments. India fell to Thomas. And Thomas said (if you will allow me to paraphrase), "I won't go. . . . I can't travel that far." Then, thinking of a better excuse, he added, "Besides, I don't speak Indian." Thomas had found he could trust Jesus, but he was not yet ready to follow him. He was still Thomas, and a large part of the old Thomas was still in him.

Even when the Lord appeared to him in a vision, and said, according to the legend, "Go to India, Thomas, for my grace is with you," Thomas dug in his heels and said, "Anywhere else, Lord, but I'm not going to India."

No India for Thomas. But the point is not really India. The point is obedience. If the call had been to

stay and preach in Jerusalem, and Thomas had insisted on going to India, the lesson would have been the same. "Faith without works is dead," and in the ministry the first work requirement of a disciple is the discipline of obedience. "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

But stubborn Thomas would not obey. Even when as a last resort and as the only way to get him to go to India, he was sold as a slave—a slave and a carpenter for an Indian King named Gundaphar, so the story goes—he brooded rebelliously and wrestled in his soul all night, until he found peace, not so much as a slave of Gundaphar, but as a slave of Christ, and so the servant of everyone. Then at last he was able to say, "Not my will but Thine be done." It was a hard way to learn obedience, and it was only as a very reluctant volunteer that he went without triumph into his ministry, a slave.

Strangely enough, it is often the most reluctant disciples who make the best ministers. They may come hard to the decision, but once they decide to follow, they obey. If it is to be India, that's it. If closer to home, that is all right too.

These days I find some of the nearer places almost as untouched by Christian faith as the traditional "unreached fields." In a talk here in Princeton a few weeks ago George Gallup mentioned some surprising facts that had turned up in one of his polls on religion in America. "Eight in ten [Americans] say they are Christians but only half that number know who delivered the Sermon on the Mount. Most Amer-

icans think the Ten Commandments are valid rules for living, but many have a tough time recalling exactly what those rules are. And for [American] teenagers, of the greatest persons in history, Jesus ranks [a poor] fifth!"

We talk about a revival of religion in America but the statistics tell a different story. North America and Europe were more Christian in your grandparent's day than ours. Since 1900, says the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, "massive defections from Christianity," of secularists in Western Europe, communists in Russia and Eastern Europe, and materialists in the Americas, have made the fastest growing religion in the West not Christianity, and not one of the other great world religions, but no religion. Professed non-religion in America is growing six and a half times faster than Christianity; in Europe twelve times faster. "Every year some 2,765,000 church attenders in Europe and North America cease to be practicing Christians . . . an average loss of 7,600 every day" (pp. 3, 7, 783f.). Suddenly America is a mission field. It has been all along, of course, and we were wise enough once to have a Board of National Missions which could remind us of that fact.

Some years ago I was thrown into an international working group on "The Missionary Obligation of the Church." It was an unsettling experience. I was a missionary in Korea then, and what the other members of the group wanted to know was why I should be labelled a missionary and not the man sitting next to me who happened to be a Christian and a professor in a state uni-

versity, as if by not going to Tibet he had somehow miserably failed to answer God's call. They needled me with remarks like the saying, "To be a Christian carpenter is good; to be a Christian minister is holy; to be a foreign missionary is holier than thou."

Now I do not want to abandon useful functional distinctions in Christian vocation, such as the difference between a lay ministry and the ordained pastorate, and between pastoral ministry and missionary outreach. When everything is called the ministry, and when everything the church does is called mission, soon there are no ministers, and no missionaries. But can't we admit that the work group was absolutely right in insisting that the whole world, not just the third world, is an open field for all kinds of Christian service. Where in the world that service will be for any individual is another matter. God has a way of making that matter clear only after the question of obedience is settled. Go where you feel God wants you, and if it is to Trenton, when you wanted Tibet—go to Trenton. You may find it harder than Tibet.

On the other hand, there *is* more to the world than Trenton. Some, like Thomas, need to be pushed out to "the uttermost parts." In sheer, tragic mass, that is where the greater weight of the world's need lies—hunger, poverty, oppression, fear, and despair, both physical and spiritual. Only six percent of the world's people live in North America. But choose almost any category you can think of—food, freedom, factories, or access to the good news of the gospel—and we here in America have squir-

reled away more than our fair share. Six percent of the world lives in North America; sixty percent in Asia. Three-fifths of the world's teenagers are Asian. That means that three-fifths of the world's future lies in Asia. Most of them still have not heard an effective presentation of the Christian faith. And most of them live in households with a cash income of less than \$7 a week. Isn't there something wrong with the way we keep for ourselves most of the good things of life, both good food and the good news of the gospel?

III

Common Sense and Compassion

So let me add two more ingredients to the mix that I hope will make your ministry. One was suggested to me by something Dr. Kyung-Chik Han of Korea (Class of '29) said to us yesterday before he was named Distinguished Alumnus of the year. We honored him for the way he built a church of twenty-seven refugees thirty-eight years ago into a congregation today of more than sixty thousand. We were asking him what kind of qualifications the Korean church expected of its elders. "Oh," he said, "We give them examinations: Bible, theology, church history, and. . . I think there was a fourth." He couldn't remember. Then it came to him. "Oh yes, common sense." An examination in common sense. Not a bad idea for the ministry.

But that is not enough. Add one more: compassion. To faith and obedience and common sense, add compassion. The example again is from the Thomas tradition, for it was only after he reached India, according to

the legend, that Thomas learned compassion and picked up a lesson in common sense.

Arriving as a carpenter-slave, he was sent down country to build the king's palace. But as he looked about he saw more poor people and more hungry people than he had ever seen in his life before. He forgot the king's orders; he forgot his career; he was so moved with distress at the injustice of building a luxury palace for a king in the midst of the poverty around him, that he dipped into the construction funds which he had been given and began to feed the poor. It is a beautiful early Christian illustration of compassion and advocacy for the poor, but why didn't he have the common sense to realize that stealing from the construction funds would only get him into trouble. A royal inspector came; the funds were gone; and the palace had not been built. Thomas was thrown into prison as an embezzler to be executed in the morning.

I suppose I should finish the story, though here *The Acts of Thomas* gets a little wild. That night, tradition says, the king's brother died and his soul was caught up to the abode of the dead. On the way he saw a great mansion. "Whose is that?" he asks his escorting angels. "That," they say, "is a palace being built in heaven for King Gundaphar by a slave named Thomas." The prince is horrified. "But my brother is going to execute that slave; let me go stop him." So the angels allow him to appear to the king in a vision, and he tells him, "Don't kill the Jewish slave. He really is building you a palace, not a wooden one but an eternal one in heaven."

(That I guess is supposed to make the embezzlement moral.) In any case, Thomas is brought out of prison to explain the vision, and stands up to preach the gospel to the king. And that part of the story ends happily and romantically with the king believing and all his people with him.

But my model is not strange visions, instant success, and embezzlement. I told you *The Acts of Thomas* was apocryphal. The ministry is not given to be used for achieving sudden success by dubious means. Even in the tradition the story does not end there; it ends with martyrdom.

You have probably gathered by now that I don't want you to follow Thomas in everything. We do not need the Thomas tradition as our model of faith and obedience, common sense, and compassion in the ministry. We have Thomas' Lord.

I doubt if Mary Slessor had ever heard of *The Acts of Thomas*. But she knew the Lord, and with good Scottish common sense she built her ministry around three simple propositions: Only Christ saves; never compromise with truth; and never withhold love. When she went to Africa with so bluntly Christian a philosophy she stirred things up faster than she had anticipated. The Africans called her "the tornado"—she was red-headed, strong-willed, and had a temper—but because they knew she loved them, they also called her "the white African." "She came to live like an African, and a poor African at that," wrote one of her biographers (Buchan).

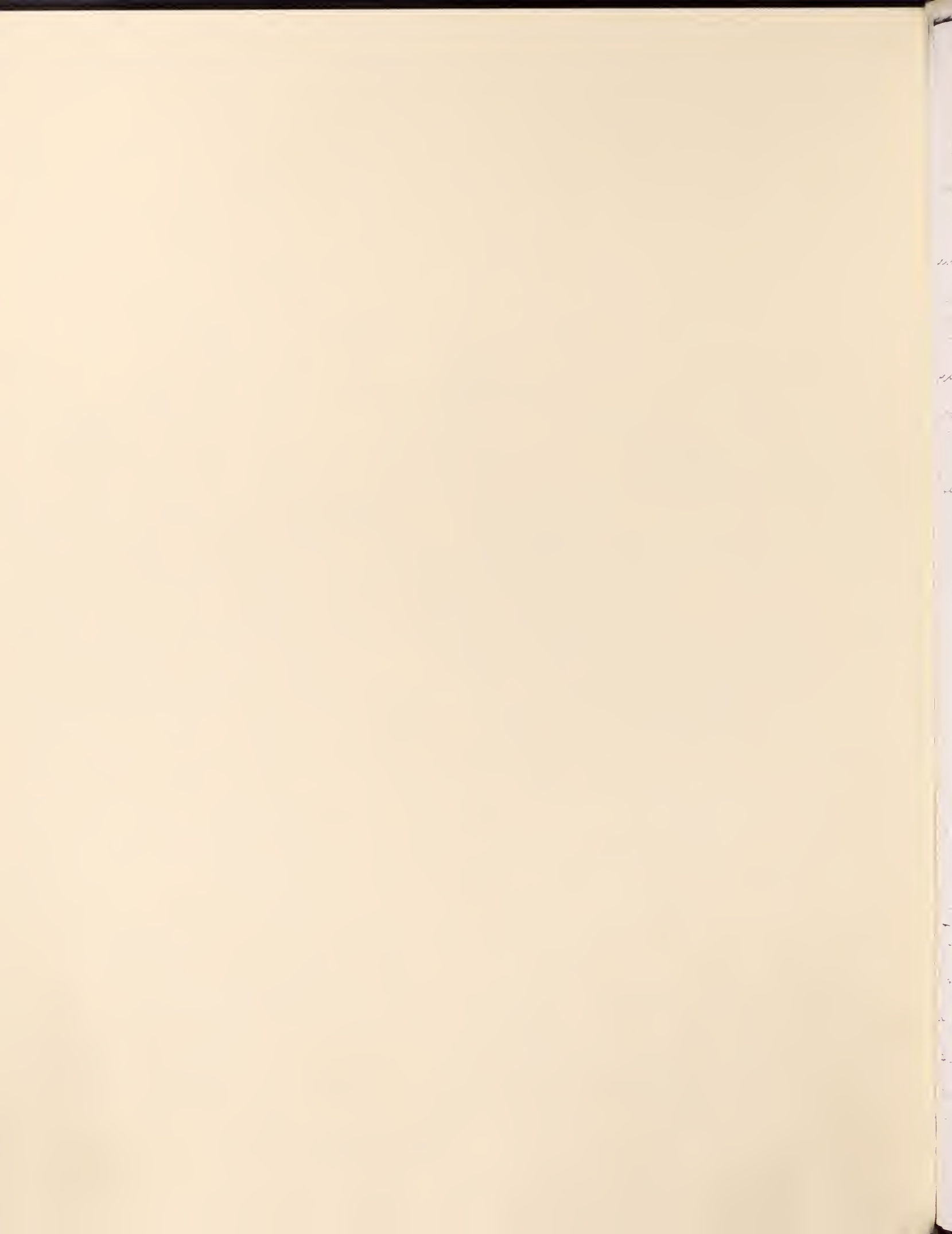
And I doubt that William Mackenzie had ever heard of *The Acts of Thomas*. But he knew the Lord.

Mackenzie was one of the pioneers we are celebrating this year as Korea observes its 100th anniversary of Protestant missions. He went out in 1893. You might say his story is the story of a failure. When he told his fiancée he was going to Korea she broke the engagement. But he felt the Lord had told him to go and he went anyway. He went out alone, far into the country, to live in a mud-walled, straw-roofed house with a Korean family in a little village by the sea. Some thought Mackenzie had gone mad. And perhaps they were right, partly. The isolation, the steaming heat, the disease all around him proved too much, and one day, delirious with a fever and out of his head with pain, he put a gun to his head and shot himself. He didn't know what he was doing. He had been in Korea just a year and a half.

Another small, flawed ministry. A failure.

But when Mackenzie's fellow missionaries came to claim the body the villagers refused to let them take it. He belongs to *us* now, they said. And they buried him where he belonged in their Christian village. For years—I remember it myself as a boy—those faithful country people saw to it that his grave was kept spotless. A failure? A small ministry? Flawed, perhaps, but there was nothing small about it, and it was no failure.

Class of 1985, my prayer today is that not one of you will leave Princeton for too small a ministry. Remember Mackenzie, and Mary Slesor, and Thomas. But don't follow them. Follow their Lord. Follow Jesus Christ. And power to you through all the years ahead.



July 13. 05-

We there had been up to this time no regular organization of the mission. it was deemed best to now keep a regular account of proceedings and elect officers. Dr Allen being chosen chair man, pro. tem. called the mission to order. when Dr. H. H. H. was elected sec. pro. tem. these elections being made permanent. a letter from Dr Ellinwood of the Board, was read in which he spoke of the necessity for retrenching & asking that we send in estimates of expenses beginning Aug 1. 05, having no special business to transact the mission adjourned to meet on call of Chairman.

J. W. H. H. H.
Sec.

July 20. 05-

A meeting was called by the chairman to consider some remarks made in reference to him by Dr Anderson concerning his treatment of the Methodist missionaries who are connected with him (Dr. A.) & living in one of the houses belonging to this mission, in substance such charges that Dr. A. did not treat them in a Christian spirit. Dr. Allen, asked that he own this or retract, after some explanations on both sides this was done after which the meeting adjourned.

J. W. H. H. H.
Sec.

April 24, 1985

Dear Marius:

I've been rechecking the dates in the article on YUN CHI-HO, as well as comparing different accounts and asking questions. If it is not too late, I'd like to make the following corrections.

Page 1

line 1. The name should add a hyphen: YUN CHI-HO [not YUN CHI HO]. This is the form used in most recent academic works, it is particularly helpful to indicate whether the Korean or English word order of ~~names is used~~ ~~names is used~~ is used.

lines 1,2. 1865-1945 [not 1867-1946], as dates of birth and death. There is wide variation of sources on the birthdate. 1867 is that found in Paik Nak-Joon's widely used history. A more recent scholar, Donald Clark has 1864, but admits uncertainty. I now prefer 1865, following the editors of the Yun Diary. The date of death is more certain: Dec. 6, 1945.

line 6. Lucius Foote [not Gen. Foote]. The title is pretentious, a Civil War courtesy appointment as military aide to the ~~Governor~~ Governor of California.

Page 2

line 7. So Chae-P'il [not So Chae Pil]. The phonetic aspirative is important.

1. 16. (until 1905) [not in 1905]. The date of his appointment I could not find. He ~~left~~ left in 1905 with the establishment of the protectorate. You may or may not want the parentheses.

1. 22. (1911-1915) [not 1912-1915]. I think Donald Clark is correct on this, though others give the later date.

Bibliography

Add one more item: Donald N. Clark, "Yun Ch'i-Ho (1864-1945): Portrait of a Korean Intellectual in an Era of Transition", in Occasional Papers on Korea, No. 4, ed. by J.B. Palois and M.D. Lang. Seattle: University of Washington, 1975. (pp. 36-75).

YUN CH'I-HO

"Baron" was a Japanese title inherited from his father, Yun Ung-yol, who was one of the Korean aristocrats granted peerage and a stipend by the Japanese in 1910, as part of the effort to buy off influential opposition. I wrote a biography of Yun and the documentation is attached.

"The first Korean nobleman. . ." Because of the "Baron" title it seems to have been a habit of missionary writers (Southern Methodists especially) to play up this nobility and to accord him deference by frequent use of the title. Members of the Yun family (perhaps in hindsight) claim that Yun thought the title an albatross and winced whenever it was used.

But the "nobleman" title, which is more general, was not as offensive, they say. The Yun family was no more or less noble, though, than other Yangban; or perhaps a little less noble, since Yun Ung-yol was a military official, rather than a civil official.

I'd change "nobleman" to "aristocrat," or Yangban (probably not appropriate for a general encyclopedia).

Are you sure about the 1867 birth date? I had a lot of trouble with this because of the lunar calendar, but ended up with 1864.

Vice-Foreign Minister. Left post with the protectorate treaty, 1905.

In prison because of the Conspiracy Case, 1911-1915.

He was president of Yonhi College from 1940 on, as part of a deal worked out between H.H. Underwood and the Gov-General's Education Bureau. The vice-President, Matsumoto Teru, was the real head of the institution. How long Yun stayed in office I have never been able to find out. The campus was closed and turned into an army training center in 1943; as far as I know the Japanese dissolved it as an institution then (this from George Paik).

You could add my biography to the bibliography on Yun. An obscure publication but accessible to librarians nevertheless.

Gregorio deCespedes

James Chu (Chou Wen-mu)

Further Romanization quibbles in the right margins as you go along.

Looks good.

YUN CH'I HO

YUN CH'I-HO (Baron Yun Tchi-Ho, 1867-1946) aristocrat, reformer and Christian leader, was sent at age 15 to Japan for special training in international languages. He returned in 1883, age 17, as interpreter for the first American Minister to Korea, ^{Lucius} ~~Gen.~~ Foote. After the uprising of December 1884 he went for safety to Shanghai, enrolling in the Anglo-Chinese College, where in 1887 he became a Christian, the first Korean Methodist and the ^{aristocrat} ~~nobleman~~ first Korean nobleman to become a Protestant.

YUN CH'I-HO

Lucius Foote

aristocrat?

That same year he went to America where he became an eloquent student champion of foreign missions at Emory College and in the theological course at Vanderbilt. He returned to China in 1893 and two years later went home with his Chinese bride to Korea.

High family connections and remarkable linguistic ability in five tongues (Korean, Chinese, Japanese, English and French) won him advancement at court as vice-minister of education, Korean representative to the coronation of the Russian Czar

*Baron was a
 aristocrat? How did
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and the Jubilee Celebrations of Queen Victoria. His most important position was as vice-minister of the King's powerful Advisory Council.

But in 1896 his international experience and ~~strong~~ ethical convictions led him to risk his career and join the young reformers, Philip Jaisohn (So Chae-Pil) and Syngman Rhee, in founding the Independence Club. As president of the club Yun led mass meetings in Seoul in 1898 which wrung from a reluctant officialdom rights of free speech and assembly and certain democratic limitations on royal power. But reaction was swift. Yun was abruptly sent north as a district magistrate and the Independence Club collapsed. By the time he returned to power as acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, ~~in 1905~~ ^{a little later in the}, it was too late for either reform or independence. Japan was in control, and he left the post in 1905.

So Chae-p'il

His activities under Japanese colonial rule were restricted to religious affairs. He founded a successful Anglo-Korean School in Kaesong (1907), was unjustly imprisoned for alleged anti-Japanese conspiracy (1912-15), became General-Secretary of the YMCA (1915-20), and for an unhappy period during World War II was president of what is now Yonsei University.

? did he keep as good as his word in this matter -

? correct

? I've not seen him listed as such but have often heard the he was and his father was with the president in the U.S. pres. office.

Bibliography: Yun Ch'i Ho Ilgi (Diary of Yun Tchi Ho), 5 vols. in Chinese, English and Korean sections. Seoul: National History Compilation Committee, 1975.

Any other bibliography that should be added?
Donald N. Clark, "Yun Ch'i-ho (1864-1945): Portrait of a Korean Intellectual in an Era of Transition", in *Occasional Papers on Korea*, No. 4, ed. by G. B. Palais and M. D. Lang; Seattle: U of Washington, 1975, pp. 36-75.

Train Asians in Asia: A New Mission Strategy



Dr. Bong Rin Ro

Asian Perspective 35



TRAIN ASIANS IN ASIA: A NEW MISSION STRATEGY

by

BONG RIN RO, Th.D.

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and Dean of Asia Graduate School of Theology

INTRODUCTION

God might seem to be least active in Asia, where more than 2.8 billion people, 58% of the world's population reside. Atheistic communism, controlling over half the Asian population, has been spreading to China, North Korea, Vietnam, Kampuchea, Laos, and Afghanistan.

There is a resurgence of living religions such as Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Shintoism. The Asians face a modern Constantine Era in which religion and politics are merging together. Considered a "non-Christian" continent, the Christian population including Roman Catholics represents only 3% of the total, the smallest minority when compared to other continents. Therefore, many people in Asia and the West are asking the same question which the Egyptian Pharaoh asked Moses centuries ago, "Where is your God?"

Put into the context of this present generation, the question would be, "Where in Asia is your Christian God?" If we look beneath the surface we can observe that Jehovah God has not left Asia and its people but has been laying a spiritual foundation in Asia in a quiet way to accomplish His redemptive purposes. God is working mightily among Asians and is still in control of Asia's national affairs.

I. ASIA'S POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

The place of Asia in the affairs of mankind in the coming decades cannot be ignored. Dr. Arnold Toynbee, a twentieth century historian stated, "The changing events of Asia today will decide the future of the world tomorrow." Economically and politically, the future history may very well be called the Asian Age. God has His focus on the Asian continent and the Asian Church. God's activities are observable in the political, economic, cultural, and religious avenues of Asian life.

More than 120 nations in the world have received their political independence since 1945. All the nations in Asia except Japan and Thailand have experienced oppressive foreign rule. Today, all nations in Asia except Hong Kong have received their independence. Previously, it was the foreigners who controlled the internal as well as the foreign affairs of their colonies. The expatriates regulated missionary activities. Since independence, however, each nation is controlling its own affairs, including religious policies and foreign missionary activities. As a result of this self-control, Asian countries are experiencing a resurgence of nationalism and traditional values. This resurgence which derives from patriotic passion has been expressed in culture, linguistics and religion.

Related to rising nationalism and resurgence of traditional values, a common motto throughout Asia is, "Import Western technology but retain your traditional culture." Christianity, frequently misconstrued by many Asians as a Western religion, is often repudiated. Due to political and religious policies, it is increasingly difficult for the foreign missionary to enter a number of Asian countries such as Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Brunei, Indonesia, and Thailand.

In some cases, indigenization of the national church was accomplished by the national government by

barring missionaries. Therefore, the training of national leadership is currently an urgent need in the Asian church.

There has been a resurgence of major religions in Asia. Religion is used by governments to promote national interests. For example, there is renewed activity of Islam in Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

Buddhism, on the other hand, is also being revived in Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam, Kampuchea, Burma, and Sri Lanka. In Taiwan, for example, there is now one Buddhist temple for every 1,000 adherents. As the temples increase, so does the fervor for Buddhism. In India, Hinduism is also being revived through its reform movements, such as Brammo Samaj and the Arya Samaj and Ramah Krishna missions. In Japan, there is a renewed interest in Japanese Shintoism which is expected to be reinstated in the Japanese educational system. The revival of these religions is associated with the call back to traditional cultures which the governments are advocating.

There are three large non-Christian groups which constitute the majority of Asia's two billion people. The first group is that of the communist nations: Peoples Republic of China, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea, and Afghanistan. Together these represent over 1.1 billion people. In the second group there are over 600 million Hindus in India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Singapore, and Fiji practicing this religion. The Islamic bloc constitutes the third group, with 400 million Muslims in Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, and additional millions of other Muslims in Southwest Asia. The Islamic bloc, except in Indonesia, has been the least responsive group to the Gospel.

In Asia as a whole, Christianity, including both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, is professed by approximately 3% of the total population. The following chart provides information on Christian populations in different countries in Asia.¹

CHRISTIAN POPULATION IN ASIA

NORTHEAST ASIA	Population in Millions	Per Cent of Christians
JAPAN	120	1 (Prot. 0.6)
KOREA (SOUTH)	40	25 (Prot.18)
TAIWAN	20	4 (Prot. 2)
HONG KONG	5.5	10 (Prot. 6)
RED CHINA	1,000	5
SOUTHEAST ASIA		
THAILAND	52	0.5 (Prot. 0.2)
PHILIPPINES	51	88 (Prot. 5)
INDONESIA	165	20 (16)
SINGAPORE	2.5	12 (Prot. 6)
MALAYSIA	13	5.3 (Prot. 2)
BURMA	32	4 (Prot. 3)
VIETNAM	45	6 (Prot. 0.4)
KAMPUCHEA	8	-
LAOS	3.5	-
SOUTH ASIA		
INDIA	730	2.5 (Prot. 1)
PAKISTAN	100	2.5 (Prot. 1.5)
BANGLADESH	100	0.3 (Prot.0.15)
SRI LANKA	15	7 (Prot. 1)
NEPAL	16	-
AFGHANISTAN	18.3	-
ASIA (TOTAL)	2,800	3

II. BASIC ISSUES IN THE ASIAN CHURCH

A. According to a survey conducted by ATA, eleven church leaders cited seven basic issues confronting the Asian church. They described the issues as:

1. Need for grass-roots evangelism
2. Lack of trained leadership
3. Need for lay training
4. Contextualization

5. Christian social responsibility (holistic approach)
6. Theological issues: Asian theology, dialogue with other living religions, human rights
7. Spiritual renewal.²

Let us then look into the lack of trained leadership and need of lay training in the Asian Church.

B. Shortage of Trained Leadership.

One of the major hindrances to the growth of the Asian Church is the lack of trained spiritual leaders. The large Batak Church (HKBP) in North Sumatra which has approximately 1½ million members, including children, has only 287 parish ministers--a ratio of one pastor serving 5,000 members. One of the church districts which consists of 43 churches with 10,591 members has only one ordained pastor.³

Another Lutheran denomination in North Sumatra (GKPI) with 117,000 members and 600 churches in 1982 had only 68 ordained pastors and 23 evangelists. The Protestant Church in Sabah in East Malaysia had 130 churches and 12,000 members with eight pastors and 160 lay leaders. Among 2,200 churches in Taiwan, some 500 do not have pastors.⁴

In India, the second most populous nation in the world with 730 million people, 400 villages have a ratio of one pastor to eight churches. Another 200 villages have a ratio of one pastor to 180 churches. The ratio between full-time Christian workers and population is one to 120,000.⁵

Rev. Samrit Wongsang, vice moderator of the Church of Christ in Thailand, (CCT), also pointed out a dearth of leadership in his country:

Eighty ministers have to serve 263 local churches throughout the country. Many churches are able to serve holy communion only once a year, because they cannot afford to hire a full-time worker.

Eighty percent of the Thai churches are located in the rural areas and eighty percent of these churches do not have pastors. It is difficult to expect church growth without adequate spiritual leadership of pastors and lay leaders.

An inevitable consequence of this shortage of Christian workers is the large percentage of drop-outs among baptized converts from the church. For example, from Buddhist and folk religious backgrounds. They became Christians through English Bible studies, English camps, and other student activities.

Dr. Allan Swanson, veteran Lutheran missionary in Taiwan, in The Church in Taiwan: Profile 1980, cited alarming statistics that the drop-out rate among the Mandarin speaking churches was 5.1 out of 6.1 converts while among the Taiwanese churches it was 2.3 out of 3.3 converts.⁷ When these young converts married and set up their own families, they disappeared from the church. The strong family ties within the Taiwanese churches helps to sustain this lesser drop-out rate.

Nevertheless, Dr. Swanson alluded to the lack of a teaching ministry within the church as one of the main causes for this loss of new converts. This critical problem of drop-outs represents a typical situation in other Asian countries.

III. PRIORITIES FOR MODERN MISSIONS IN ASIA

It has been my privilege to work with theological schools in Asia for the past seventeen years. In coordinating evangelical theological education under the sponsorship of Asia Theological Association, one question repeatedly comes to my mind over the years: "How can we Christians who represent a mere 3% evangelize the billions of non-Christians in Asia with the Gospel of Christ?" It is obvious that we cannot depend on the 10,000 Western missionaries to evangelize Asia. We must

find a better way. It is my firm conviction that the chief service of Western missionaries is to train Asian Christians in Asia, so that these nationals can reach their own people on the grass-roots level with the Gospel.

Therefore, I propose for Asia four suggestions for missions in the coming decades.

- A. The burden of communicating the gospel and making disciples in the Third World must primarily be the nationals' responsibility.
- B. Effective church growth in the Third World depends on the creative and spirit-filled leadership of pastors and lay leaders.
- C. The top priority of missionary work in the Third World in the coming decades should be the training of nationals.

THEREFORE, TRAIN THE NATIONAL, GIVE HIM RESPONSIBILITY, AND TRUST HIM TO DO THE JOB.

- D. **TRAIN ASIANS IN ASIA** in order to curtail the brain drain, to save the Lord's money, to deal with the particular Asian issues which they face, and to produce leaders in quality and quantity.

IV. PROPOSALS TO MISSIONS SOCIETIES

- A. Western mission societies must re-evaluate theological education strategies and provide top priority for both residential and lay training programs in Asia. To this end the International Council of Accrediting Agencies (ICAA), consisting of five regional accrediting associations including the Asia Theological Association (ATA), has requested the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association (EFMA) and Interdenominational Foreign Missions Association (IFMA) to hold consultations on theological education with key representatives from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These consultations will provide opportunities for Western mission leaders and national theological educators to reassess the whole leadership training program in the Third World.

- B. Mission societies should recruit academically and spiritually qualified persons to teach and train the nationals in their own land.
1. Most of the 915 theological schools in Asia are lacking lecturers in all fields.
 2. There is an increasing demand for Theological Education by Extension (TEE), a more informal type of education whereby the teachers go to the students, sometimes in remote areas, for training. Also needed are TEE textbook writers who work in close cooperation with nationals to produce much needed resources for students.
 3. Many Christian Education leaders in Asia are crying for help for more C.E. lecturers and Sunday School teacher instructors. In order to meet this need, for example, the Philippines Association of Christian Education (PACE) was established in Manila with several well-qualified Filipino C.E. experts to promote C.E., to train Sunday School teachers at the local church level, and to publish C.E. materials in the vernacular languages.
 4. Communication experts in mass media can make a difference in evangelization through journalism, radio and television.
 5. More Christian counselling centers, such as the Breakthrough Counselling Centre in Hong Kong, are needed to train nationals to help themselves.
 6. More assistance is needed in promoting sacred music and ethnomusic in order that worship for the nationals is made more meaningful.
 7. Christian art, puppetry, cartoon, dance, and dramatic performance, formerly neglected by the church, can enhance spreading the Gospel message.
 8. Missionaries trained in church planting, student work, factory evangelism, etc. are also needed to train national workers to take over such responsibilities in evangelization.

- C. Missionaries on furlough should be encouraged to pursue further training in a specialized area in order to make a more specific contribution to their mission churches.

V. "TRAIN ASIANS IN ASIA"

After many years of discussion among evangelical theological educators in Asia, ATA strongly reiterates its emphasis on training Asians in Asia. The time has arrived for us in Asia to be independent from the West in theological education. "Train Asians in Asia" has become the motto of ATA.

A. Asia Graduate School of Theology

Coordinated by Asia Theological Association (ATA), the Asia Graduate School of Theology (AGST) consists of seventeen graduate seminaries in four countries: Indonesia, Japan, Korea and Philippines. Organized in 1985, AGST now offers the following graduate degrees: Th.M., Th.D., D.R.E. and D.Min. There is a possibility that India, Singapore and Malaysia may join the AGST program in the near future.⁸

There are four objectives in the AGST program:

1. **To supply faculty for theological schools.** If an Asian theologian has received a post-graduate degree from a school in the West, many theological schools in Asia will seek his teaching services. Thus, one may find a well-trained theologian teaching at three or four institutions. With such a dire shortage of well-trained evangelical theologians throughout Asia, we cannot continue to look to the West to supply educators for the 900-plus theological schools in Asia.
2. **To curtail the "Brain drain" to the West.** Statistics compiled by the National Youth Commission in Taiwan show that of 80,000 Taiwanese students who studied overseas from 1950 to 1983, more than 69,000 of them (86%) failed to return

to Taiwan.⁹ Possibly due to the pending take-over of Hong Kong in 1997 by mainland China, more than 100 Chinese pastors have left that city for the West during the past three years.¹⁰ Well-trained Chinese pastors from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and the Philippines are migrating to the West in large numbers. In fact, more Chinese theologians live in "Western Paradises," especially in North America, than in all of Asia.¹¹

In 1985 there were more than 1,570 Korean churches, 650 Chinese churches, 165 Japanese churches, and many other Asian ethnic churches among 5.1 million Asians in North America. The Asian population there will reach 10 million by 2,000 A.D.

The ratio between 1,530 Korean churches and the Korean immigrant population in North America in 1985 was 1:605 while the same ratio between churches and population in South Korea was 1:1,396. Although the Korean Church has lost hundreds of her pastors to the West, 169 theological schools with 10,000 students have annually produced 3,000-4,000 Christian workers to replace the ones who left Korea.¹² But this is not the case with other countries in Asia, where foreign missionaries still must fill the gap.

Thousands of other well-trained pastors from the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, India and other Asian countries have likewise migrated to the West. The American Consulate in Madras reported that in the late 1970's the "brain drain" among Indian theological students was 90%.¹³ This is a primary reason why hundreds of churches in India do not have pastors.

While well-trained Asian pastors are immigrating to the West, new missionaries from the West are coming to Asia to reach Asians. This is certainly a paradox.

The solution to this severe problem is to establish our own theological schools throughout Asia. Through programs like AGST we can retain many more theologians and church leaders for Asia.

3. **To provide more economical training for Asians.** It costs approximately £26,000 or US\$36,000 to train a Singaporean student who has a Th.M. degree and wants to pursue his Ph.D. at Cambridge University for three years. The annual expense for an Indian student who is studying at a well-known seminary in California is \$12,775.14
In contrast, training a Filipino theologian in the Philippines costs one-fifth of what it costs to train him in the West. Thus, by training Asians in Asia we will be able to train far more students with the same amount of the Lord's money.
4. **To encourage cultural adaptation of theological education.** Because of the political, economic and cultural differences between Asia and the West, Asian theological students studying in the West often discover that much of what they learn is irrelevant to their own Asian contexts. Western evangelical theological schools have emphasized the inerrancy of the Scriptures and orthodox theology versus liberal and neo-orthodox theologies. But these are not major issues in Asia. Rather, the prevalent areas of concern here are poverty, suffering, injustice, communism, and non-Christian religions. For this reason, contextualization is crucial. By training Asians in Asia, we will be able to contextualize theological education.

B. Proposals to Theological Educators in the West

Many theological educators in the West are unfortunately ill-advised about situations in the Third World. They still think that the best way to train leaders of these developing countries is to bring them to the West. We in Asia would recommend

to these Western theologians the following suggestions for the training of Asian church leaders:

1. Encourage Asian students to study in Asia. Administrators of evangelical seminaries in North America should understand the cultural and financial benefits inherent to education close to home soil.
2. Encourage Western theologians to spend their sabbatical year in Asia for two main reasons. First, they can make real contributions to Asian students; and second, they can learn about Asian cultures and philosophies which have become increasingly influential among young people even in the West.

VI. SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY IN THE ASIAN CHURCH

Dr. David Barrett, in his World Christian Encyclopedia of 1982, has pointed out that the churches in Africa, Latin America and Asia are growing rapidly every year and that, for the first time in history, the majority of Christians in the world reside in the Third World and not in the West. The Christian population in Asia varies greatly from nation to nation and this is partly due to distinctive characteristics of each nation.¹⁵

The most impressive statistics in church growth come from South Korea where approximately 25% of its 40 million people are Christians. They are served by 50,000 pastors and evangelists in 30,000 churches. There are 169 theological schools with an enrollment of 10,000, 3,000 of whom graduate each year to serve in full-time Christian ministry. In Seoul alone, there are more than 8,000 churches. Its largest, called the Central Full Gospel Church, claims 400,000 members.

More than one million Christians gathered in this capital city at the Youido Plaza in 1973 for the final meeting of the Billy Graham Crusade. This record was repeated during Explo '74, World Evangelization in 1980, and the Centennial Celebration of the Protestant Church of Korea in 1984.¹⁶

Indonesia, which is the world's largest Islamic nation, is also experiencing rapid church growth. Since the unsuccessful attempted communist military coup in October, 1965, the Indonesian government has required every citizen to choose one religion among five. These include Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. This was the national way of combating atheistic communism. The government census in 1981 showed that the Christian population has jumped from 9% in 1971 to 17% in 1981, while the Muslim population had declined from 87% to 77% during that same period. Students from the Evangelical Theological Seminary of Indonesia in Yogyakarta have planted more than 300 churches in less than ten years' time.¹⁷

Improved church growth is also being reported in mainland China, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Singapore, and other countries in Asia. There is no doubt that the Spirit of God is working in the Asian Church.

Conclusion

Western missionaries, their mission executives and theological educators often operate with an obsolete nineteenth century strategy-- that western missionaries are the ones who will evangelize the world, including Asia. The key question in modern missions today is not what foreign missionaries can do themselves, but rather, what the national Christians can do with the help of foreign missionaries.

In other words, how can we use foreign missionaries to the best advantage? They should be involved in the ministries where the national Christians cannot do the job themselves. The areas where missionaries can multiply the fruits of their labor are by training the national Christians in church planting, evangelism, discipleship training, teaching by extension and theological education.

St. Paul in the first century faced a similar situation in Ephesus (Eph. 4). There are many similarities between ancient Ephesus and modern Asia today. Ephesus

was the largest city in the Roman Province of Asia with 500,000 people. Asia today contains 2.8 billion or 58% of the world's population. Ephesus was a religious city with the huge temple of Diana (Acts 19:34), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. At present, the continent of Asia is permeated with the living religions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam.

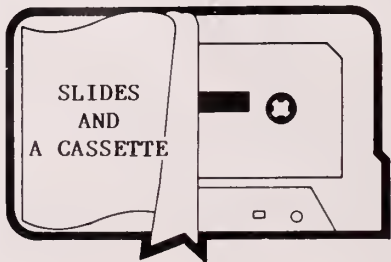
It was a sinful city, as Paul described it in Ephesians 4:19, "They, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness." In Asia we find the sins of political injustice and bribery as a way of life, wanton killing of dissidents and economic disparity whereby a few live in luxurious opulence while the masses starve.

The Ephesian Church that consisted of the Jewish and Gentile Christians (Eph. 2:11-13) was small in size, experienced lack of discipleship training (Eph. 4:14), and later lost its first love (Rev. 2:4). The Asian Church consisting of less than three percent of its total population is divided by denominationalism and provincialism and is in desperate need of discipleship training and effective leadership.

St. Paul's message to the Ephesian Church is relevant to the Asian Christians today:

He gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-12).

Printed in January 1987.



SLIDES
AND
A CASSETTE

ATA has produced a 20 minute slide presentation on the theme of "TRAIN ASIANS IN ASIA" for use in missions presentations and prayer meetings. It is available in North America, Europe, and Asia. Please write to ATA's office.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 David C.E. Laio, ed., World Christianity: East Asia (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1979). Roger E. Hedlund, Ed., World Christianity: South Asia (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1980).
- 2 "Basic Issues in the Asian Church," Asia Theological News (May, 1978), pp. 4-11, 17-19.
- 3 David Baker, "OMF and Theological Education," East Asia Millions (Aug./Sept. 1986), p.88.
- 4 Bong Rin Ro, "More Pastors Needed for Local Churches," Asia Theological News (Jan.-March, 1982), p.2. See "Asian Pastors in 'Western Paradises'" Asia Theological News (Jan.-March, 1986), p.2.
- 5 _____ . "The Pastor: Key to Renewal," Asia Theological News (April-June, 1983), p.2.
- 6 Samrit Wong Sang, "The Local-Rural Thai Church Issue," unpublished paper (Bangkok: Church of Christ in Thailand, 1981), p.14.
- 7 Allan Swanson, The Church in Taiwan: Profile 1980 (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1982), pp.225.
- 8 Asia Graduate School of Theology Catalog (Taichung, Taiwan: Asia Theological Association, 1985).
- 9 Asia Graduate School of Theology brochure, produced by Asia Theological Association in Taiwan, 1985.
- 10 Frank Allen, minister-at-large of SEND International, reported at the EFMA/IFMA Asia Brief Seminar in Chicago, April 2, 1986.
- 11 Bong Rin Ro, "Asian Pastors in 'Western Paradises'", pp.2-3.
- 12 1985 Directory of Korean Church in North America, produced by Christian Culture Co., L.A., 1985, pp.36-47, 79-88.

13

Bong Rin Ro, "More Pastors Needed for Local Churches," p.2.

14

This Indian student submitted his application to Asia Theological Association for WEF Theological Commission scholarship fund in 1984.

15

David B. Barrett, ed., World Christian Encyclopedia (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1982), pp.3-4.

16

Joon Gon Kim, "Six New Churches Everyday," Asian Perspective 17 (Taichung, Taiwan: ATA, 1978). Bong Rin Ro and Marlin Nelson, ed., Korean Church Growth Explosion (Seoul: Word of Life Press, 1983)

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Dr. Bong Rin Ro has been Executive Secretary of the Asia Theological Association (ATA) since 1974 and is Dean of the Asia Graduate School of Theology (AGST). A Korean missionary, Dr. Ro is loaned to ATA by the Overseas Missionary Fellowship.

Dr. Ro has taught Church History and Asian Studies at Discipleship Training Centre (Singapore), Singapore Bible College, Central Taiwan Seminary, Wheaton Graduate School, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and Columbia Graduate School of Bible and Missions.

He studied at the Seoul National University, Columbia Bible College (B.A. in Biblical Education), Wheaton College (B.A. in History), Covenant Seminary, (B.D.), and Concordia Theol. Sem., St. Louis, (S.T.M., Th.D.).

Dr. Ro compiled the Voice of the Church in Asia (1975), co-edited Korean Church Growth Explosion (1983), The Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts (1984), edited Christian Alternatives to Ancestor Practices (1985), and contributed numerous articles on the Asian Church to Christian magazines and books.

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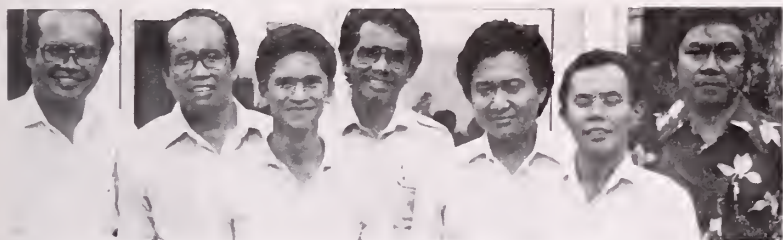
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AGST Japan Area Committee met at Kobe Lutheran Seminary on Nov. 4, 1986 to finalize the Th.M. (in Old Testament and Systematic Theology), D.Min., and Th.D. programs.



Seven AGST students in Indonesia are studying for the Th.M. in New Testament.



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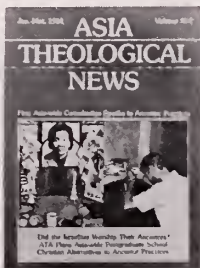


25 students from various Asian countries studying at ACTS in Seoul were interviewed for the accreditation of M.A., M.Div., Th.M. and D.Min. degrees.

Southern Asia Bible College in Bangalore, India is accredited by ATA for its B.Th. and B.D. programmes.

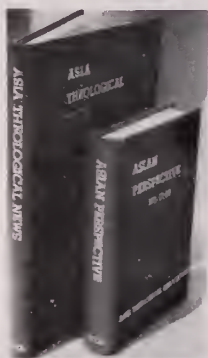


VET members met with the faculty of both English and Chinese Depts. of Malaysia Bible Seminary, October 1983.



ASIA THEOLOGICAL NEWS is a lively quarterly magazine introducing new ideas, exchanging information about Asian evangelical theological schools, and covering ATA activities.

BOUND VOLUMES. Twenty-three issues of Asia Theological News (1977 to 1985) and 23 issues of Asian Perspective (numbers 13 to 35) are available in bound volumes.



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If you or your church have a keen interest and want to pray for individual AGST students and faculty members and introduce AGST to your Asian friends to study in Asia, ATA would be glad to provide the information on the development of AGST.

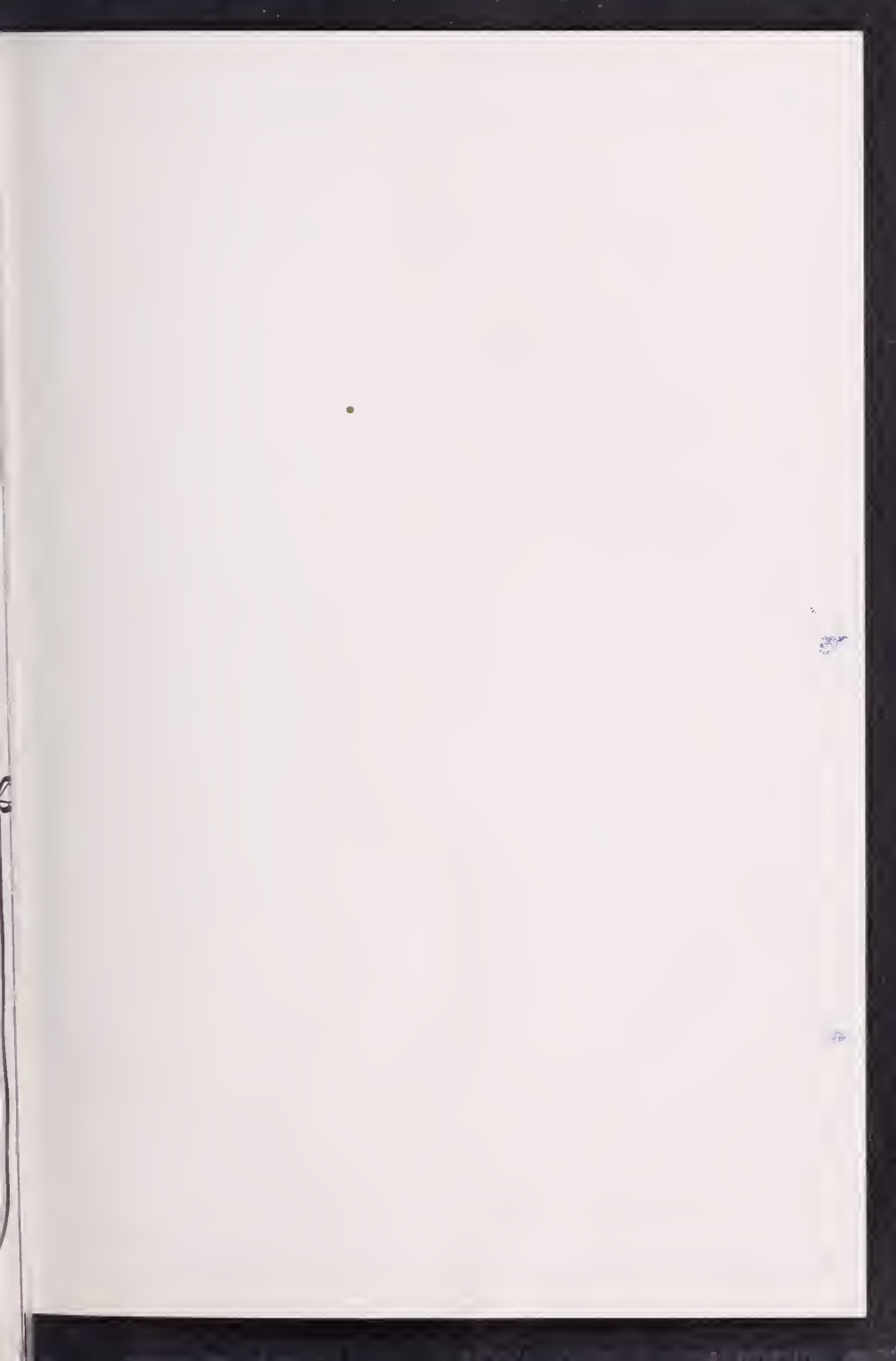
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Christian Alternatives to Ancestor Practices

祖先崇拜問題

Edited by Hoang Rin Ro



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doesn't even seem like a path at all. Sometimes I feel like a hapless passenger in the sort of small airplane they used to show in black and white movies of the 1930's, caught in a thunderstorm, bobbing through the night sky over jagged mountains without a compass.

I find strength in the hard wisdom of those who have delved much

deeper into the spiritual realm than I, like Henri Nouwen, the Dutch Roman Catholic theologian who wrote in a book our minister recommended, called "Reaching Out," that "... it would be just another illusion to believe that reaching out to God will free us from pain and suffering. Often, indeed, it will take us where we rather would not go. But we know that

without going there we will not find our life."

I was thrilled to meet Nouwen at lunch a few years ago, through the consideration of my friend and neighbor James Carroll, the former priest, now novelist. I told Father Nouwen I had read and appreciated his work, but that it dismayed me to read of his anguish in "Cry for Mercy: Prayers

From the Genessee"; it made me wonder with discouragement what chance a neophyte had in pursuit of the spiritual, when someone as advanced as Father Nouwen experienced anguish and confusion in his relation to God (I was neglecting numerous other, even more powerful examples, such as Jesus Christ calling out from the cross). Father Nouwen answered sharply that contrary to what many people may think, "Christianity is not for getting your life together!"

About a year ago, I felt as if finally, with God's help, I was on the right track in my own journey. Then I had an experience that was like running head-on into a wall. First, shock, then a kind of psychic pain as unrelenting as a dentist's drill. And in the torment I prayed, and there was no relief, and twice I turned back to my old way of dealing with things, by trying to numb the pain with drugs. Throughout all this, I never lost faith in God, never imagined He was not there, but only that His presence was obscured. Then the storm broke, like a fever, and I felt in touch again, and in the light. I was grateful, but I also knew such storms would come again, perhaps even more violently.

I learned that belief in God does not depend on how well things are going, that faith and prayer and good works do not necessarily have any correlation to earthly reward or even tranquillity, no matter how much we wish they would and think they should. I believe in God because the gift of faith (if not the gift of understanding) has been given to me, and I go to church and pray and meditate to try to be closer to His presence, and, most difficult to all, to discern His will. I know, as it says in the Book of Common Prayer, that His "service is perfect freedom," and my great frustration and anxiety is in the constant choices of how best to serve, with the particular gifts as well as limitations I've been given.

A month or so ago, I went to Glastonbury Abbey, a Benedictine monastery in Hingham, only 40 minutes or so from Boston, to spend a day and night in private retreat. I went with about 17 questions in my head about following God or the path He wills us to take. In the chapel bookstore, I saw a thin paperback volume, "Abandonment to Divine Providence," which I picked up, took to my room and devoured. It was written by an 18th-century Jesuit named Jean-Pierre de Caussade, and it sounds (at least in this new translation) as if it had been written yesterday, specifically to answer my questions. I continue to read in it almost every day, and I always find some new passage that seems to speak to the urgency of that moment. This is what I read today, when I felt again jarred and confused about what to choose and where to turn:

"So we follow our wandering paths, and the very darkness acts as our guide and our doubts serve to reassure us. The more puzzled Isaac was at not finding a lamb for the sacrifice, the more confidently did Abraham leave all to providence." ■

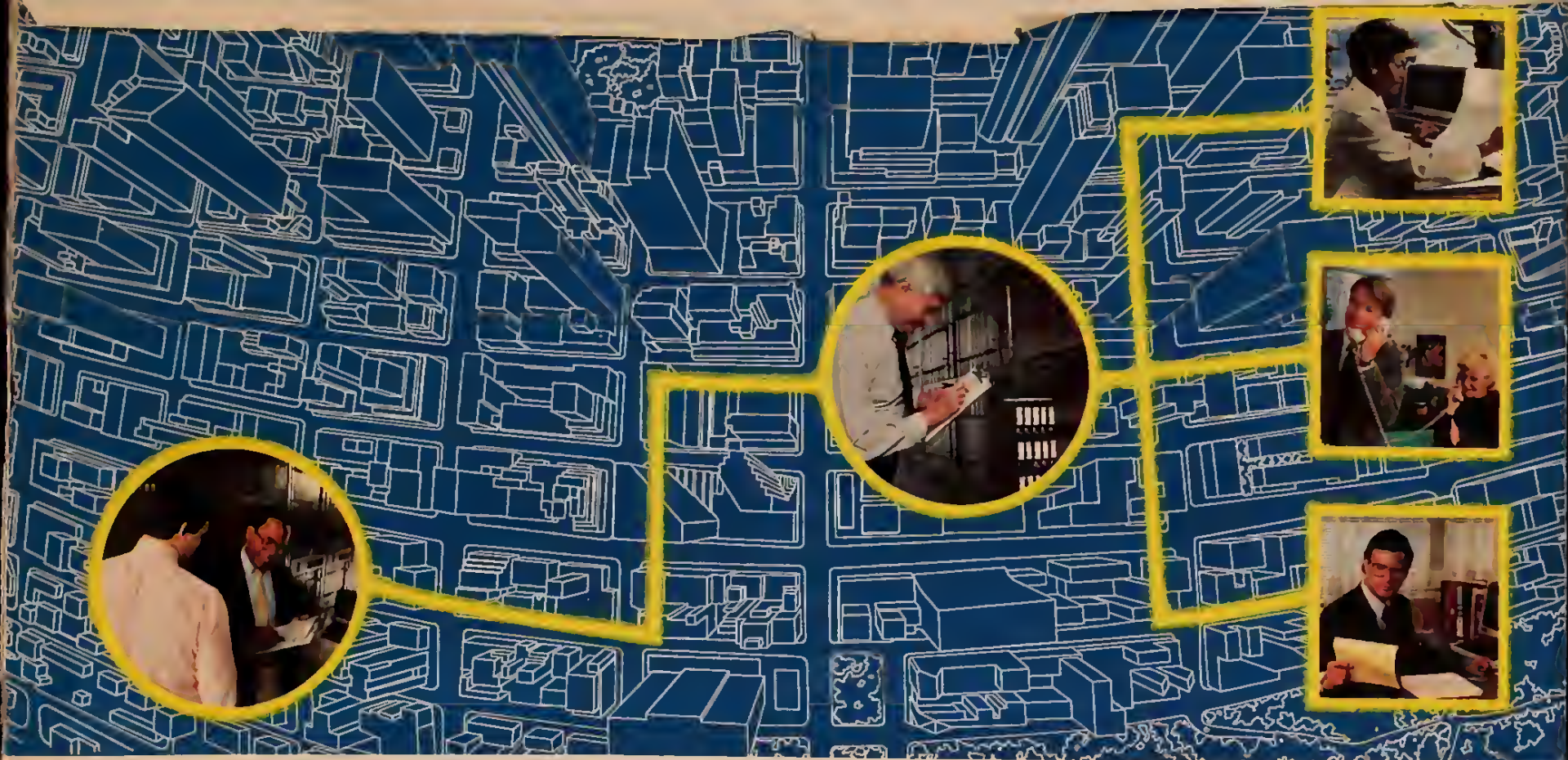
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...and a really historic opportunity for charting a new, long-term course with the Soviet Union which will be peaceful and stable for a long time."

National Security Adviser Robert C. McFarlane on arms control negotiations at the upcoming Geneva summit meetings. As quoted in *The Los Angeles Times*, Monday, 28 October 1985, Section A, Page 4.

"What he has said is that adherence to the SALT II treaty depends on Soviet behavior, and ability to have our negotiations go forward toward lowering offensive arms levels. And that's the test."

Secretary of State George P. Shultz on whether President Reagan will continue voluntary compliance with the SALT II treaty provisions. As quoted in *The Washington Post*, Monday, 11 November 1985, Section A, Page 24.

"I have respect for this old gentleman."

Soviet Central Committee member Georgi A. Arbatov speaking of President Reagan. As quoted in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Monday, 18 November 1985, Section A, Page 6.

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The author read Thomas Merton's 'The Seven Storey Mountain,' then everything else of Merton's he could get his hands on, from the sociopolitical 'Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander' to the mystical 'The Ascent to Truth.' Most meaningful of all to him was a slim 'meditation' called 'He Is Risen.'

regularly and purposely as daily medicine for 25 years, then gave up the marijuana that replaced it, and even threw away the faithful briar pipe I had clenched and puffed for a quarter of a century.

I used to worry about which of these addictions I kicked through "church" and which through secular programs, as if I had to assign proper "credit," and as if it were possible to compartmentalize and isolate the influence of God, like some kind of vitamin. The one thing I know about the deepest feeling connected with all my assortment of life-numbing addictions is that at some point or other they felt as if they were "lifted," taken away, and instead of having to exercise iron control to resist them, it simply felt better not to have to do them anymore. The only concept I know to describe such experience is that of "grace," and the accompanying adjective "amazing" comes to mind along with it.

I do not for a moment suggest that giving up booze or even drugs, or losing weight or reducing the heart rate is necessarily — or even desirably — a byproduct of religious experience. For many people, such effects may not have anything to do with religion. Each person's quest is his own, with its own imperatives and directions.

I became fascinated by other people's spiritual experiences and, 30 years after it was first recommended to me, I read Thomas Merton's "The Seven Storey Mountain." I had avoided it even when the late poet Mark Van Doren, my favorite professor and Merton's former mentor at Columbia, had spoken of it with high regard, but now I devoured it, and went on to read everything else of Merton's I could get my hands on, from the sociopolitical "Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander" to the mystical "The Ascent to Truth." Most meaningful of all was a slim "meditation" by Merton, called "He Is Risen," which I found by chance in a New York bookstore; it says in matter-of-fact prose that Christ "is in history with us, walking ahead of us to where we are going. . . ."

I thought of these words walking the brick sidewalks of Beacon Hill, thinking for the first time of my life as a "journey" rather than a battle I was winning or losing that moment, on whose immediate crashing outcome the fate of the universe (i.e., the turbulent one in my own head) depend-

ed. I remembered years ago reading Dorothy Day's column in *The Catholic Worker* when I lived in Greenwich Village, and I appreciated now for the first time the sense of the title: "On Pilgrimage."

I CANNOT PINPOINT ANY PARTICULAR time when I suddenly believed in God again while all this was going on. I only know that such belief seemed as natural as for 25 or more years before it had been inconceivable. I realized this while looking at fish.

I had gone with my girlfriend of the last several years to the New England Aquarium, and as we gazed at the astonishingly brilliant colors of some of the small tropical fish — reds and yellows and oranges and blues that seemed to be splashed on by some innovative artistic genius — and watched the amazing lights of the flashlight fish that blinked on like the beacons of some creature of a sci-fi epic, I wondered how anyone could think that all this was the result of some chain of accidental explosions! Yet I realized in frustration that to try to convince me otherwise five years before would have been hopeless. Was this what they called "conversion?"

The term bothered me because it suggested being "born again," and like many of my contemporaries, I have been put off by what seems the melodramatic nature of that label, as well as the current political beliefs that seem to go along with it. Besides, I don't feel "reborn." No voice came out of the sky nor did a thunderclap strike me on the path through the Boston Common on the way to King's Chapel. I was relieved when our minister explained that the literal translation of "conversion" in both the Hebrew and Greek is not "rebirth" but "turning." That's what this has felt like — as if I were walking in one direction and then, in response to some inner pull, I turned — not even all the way around, but only at what seemed a slightly different angle.

I wish I could say that this turning has put me on a straight, solid path with blue skies above and a warm, benevolent sun shining down. I certainly enjoy better health than when I began to "turn" five years ago, but the path I am on now seems often as dangerous and difficult as the one I was following before. Sometimes it



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Going to church, even belonging to it, did not solve life's problems – if anything, they seemed to intensify – but it provided life with a larger context, made it part of something greater than what is seen with the tunnel vision of personal concerns.

of my entry, as I had planned. I wanted the immediate sense of safety and refuge implied in belonging, being a member – perhaps like getting a passport and fleeing to a powerful embassy in the midst of some chaotic revolution.

Going to church, even belonging to it, did not solve life's problems – if anything, they seemed to intensify around this time – but it gave me a sense of living in a larger context, of being part of something greater than what I could see through the tunnel vision of my personal concerns. I now looked forward to Sunday because it meant going to church; what once was strange now felt not only natural but essential. Even more remarkably, the practice of regular attendance at Sunday services, which such a short time ago seemed religiously "excessive," no longer seemed enough. Whatever it was I was getting from church on Sunday morning, I wanted – needed, it felt like – more of it.

I experienced what is a common phenomenon for people who in some way or other begin a journey of the kind I so unexpectedly found myself on – a feeling simply and best described as a "thirst" for spiritual understanding and contact; to put it bluntly, I guess, for God. I noticed in the church bulletin an announcement of a Bible-study class in the parish house, and I went one stormy autumn evening to find myself with only the church's young seminarian on hand and one other parishioner. Rather than being disappointed by the tiny turnout, as I ordinarily would have been, I thought of the words "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," and I felt an interior glow that the pouring rain outside and occasional claps of thunder only made seem more vital and precious. I don't remember what text we studied that evening, but I

can still smell the rain and the coffee and feel the aura of light and warmth.

Later in the season, I attended a Bible-study session the minister led for a gathering of about 20 people on the story of Abraham and Isaac, and I came away with a sense of the awesomeness and power of faith, a quality that loomed above me as tremendous and hard and challenging and tangibly real as mountains. The Bible-study classes, which I later, with other parishioners, learned to lead on occasion myself, became a source of power, like tapping into a rich vein.

Bible study was not like examining history, but holding up a mirror to my own life, a mirror in which I sometimes saw things I was trying to keep hidden, even from myself. The first scripture passage I was assigned to lead was from Luke, about the man who cleans his house of demons, and seven worse ones come. I did not have any trouble relating this to "contemporary life." It sounded unnervingly like an allegory about a man who had stopped drinking and so was enjoying much better health, but took up smoking marijuana to "relax," all the while feeling good and even self-righteous about giving up the booze. It was my own story. I realized, with a shock, how I'd been deceiving myself, how much more "housecleaning" I had to do.

I WAS NOT ONLY GOING to church and devoting time to Bible study and prayer during this period, I was actively engaged in purely secular programs of physical and mental therapy and "personal growth" to try to pull myself out of the pit I found myself in when I fled home to Boston in the spring of 1980. I got into an exercise and diet program that in six months cut my pulse rate from a dangerously stress-induced 120 to a healthy 60, and shed 20 pounds. I gave up the alcohol that I had used as



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**It's of no use for eating, sleeping or swimming.
So, asks the author, what is a living room for?**

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RELIGION

Continued from Page 17



POLLY BROWN ARCHIVE

The author Don Wokefield outside King's Chapel, in Boston, where he now attends services.

man seeking salvation through drugs, alcohol and promiscuity. I proudly posed for the picture in 1973 at my new living room bar, flanked by bottles of favorite vodkas, bourbons and burgundies. It did not look like the picture of a man who was headed to church.

IN THE YEAR THAT LED to my going to the Christmas Eve service, I felt I was headed for the edge of a cliff. I could have scored at the top of those magazine tests that list the greatest stresses of life, for that year saw the dissolution of a seven-year relationship with the woman I had fully expected to live with the rest of my life, I ran out of money, left the work I was doing, the house I owned, and the city I was living in, and attended the funeral of my father in May and my mother in November.

In the midst of this chaos, I one day grabbed an old Bible from among my books, and with a desperate instinct turned to the 23d Psalm. It brought a sense of relief, and sometimes I recited it in my mind in the months that followed, but it did not give me any sense that I suddenly believed in God. It simply seemed an isolated source of solace and calm, such as any great poem might be. It certainly did not give rise to the notion of anything as radical as going to church.

After my Christmas Eve experience at King's Chapel, I didn't get up the nerve to go back again until Easter. I did not have any attacks of shivering or chills in the spring sunshine of that service, so it seemed that even as a "latecomer" and former avowed atheist, I could safely enter a place regarded as a house of God. Still, the prospect was discomfiting. My two initial trips of return had been on major holidays, occasions when "regular" people went to church, simply in observance of tradition. To go back again meant crossing the Boston Common on a non-holiday Sunday morning wearing a suit and tie, a giveaway sign of churchgoing. I did it furtively, as if I were engaged in something that would not be approved of by my peers. I hoped they would all be home doing brunch and the Sunday papers, so I would not be "caught in the act." I recalled the remark of William F. Buckley Jr. in a television interview that if you mention God more than once at New York dinner parties, you aren't invited back.

To my surprise, I recognized neighbors and even some people I considered friends at church, on a "regular" Sunday. I had simply assumed I did not know people who went to church, yet here they were, with intellects intact, worshiping God. Once inside the church myself, I understood the appeal. No

doubt my friends and neighbors found, as I did, relief and refreshment in connecting with age-old rituals, reciting psalms and singing hymns. There was a calm reassurance in the stately language of the litanies and chants of the Book of Common Prayer. (King's Chapel is "Unitarian in theology, Anglican in worship, and congregational in governance," a historical Boston amalgam that will be three centuries old next June.) I was grateful for the sense of shared reverence, of reaching beyond one's flimsy physical presence, while praying with a whole congregation.

I began to appreciate what was meant by the church as "sanctuary." The word itself took on new resonance for me; when I later heard of the "sanctuary" movement of New England churches offering shelter to Central American political refugees, I thought of the kind of private refuge that fortunate citizens like myself find in church from the daily assaults of business and personal pressures and worries, the psychic guerrilla warfare of everyday life.

Caught in an escalation of that kind of battle in my own professional campaigns (more painful because so clearly brought on by my own blundering), I joined the church in May 1982, not wanting to wait until the second Christmas Eve anniversary

ROOM WITH VIEW - AND NO PEOPLE

By Nora Ephron

HAVE A NICE LIVING ROOM. YOU SHOULD COME sit in it some day. You will undoubtedly be alone when you do, because no one ever sits in the living room. (Unless we have company. Otherwise, never.) We talk a lot about the fact that no one ever sits in the living room. It makes us all sad. The living room is the prettiest room in the apartment. It has a fireplace and moldings. It has a slice of a view of the river. It is a cheerful room furnished in light colors. The couches in it were recently cleaned by men with small machines. It always looks neat and tidy. That's because no one ever uses it, I know that, but still. You should see it. I already said that, but I mean it.

Many reasons have been put forward for why we never use the living room. Last year, I came to believe that the main reason was the lamps. So I got new lamps. They are much more attractive than the old lamps. Also, they make the room much brighter. It is now possible to see in the living room. It is even possible to read in the living room. Still, we don't use the living room. Sometimes, in the evening, when we are feeling particularly melancholy about not using the living room, we wander into it and admire the new lamps and talk about what I have this year come to believe are the reasons why we never use the living room. Perhaps if there were a phone in the living room, but I don't like phones in living rooms. Perhaps if there were a television set, but I feel as strongly about television sets in living rooms as I do about phones. Perhaps new window treatments would help, but talk of window treatments makes me even more melancholy than the plight of the living room. Perhaps (this crosses my mind every year at this time) if we put the Christmas tree in the living room, but the living room is so full of furniture waiting for someone to come sit down that there is no room in it for a tree. Anyway, everyone knows the tree belongs in the entrance hall.

Years ago, when I lived in a two-room apartment, I never used the living room either. I used the bedroom. I worked in the bedroom, I ate in the bedroom, I slept in the bedroom. Now I have an apartment with many rooms. I work in the study, I eat in the kitchen, I continue to sleep in the bedroom. Sometimes I think about moving the bed into the living room. This would not solve the problem of why we never use the living room — because the living room would then be the bedroom — but at least we would use the room that is supposed to be the living room for something. The trouble with the idea is that the living room has no closets and is a long way from the bathroom. Also, I am too old to have a bed in the living room.

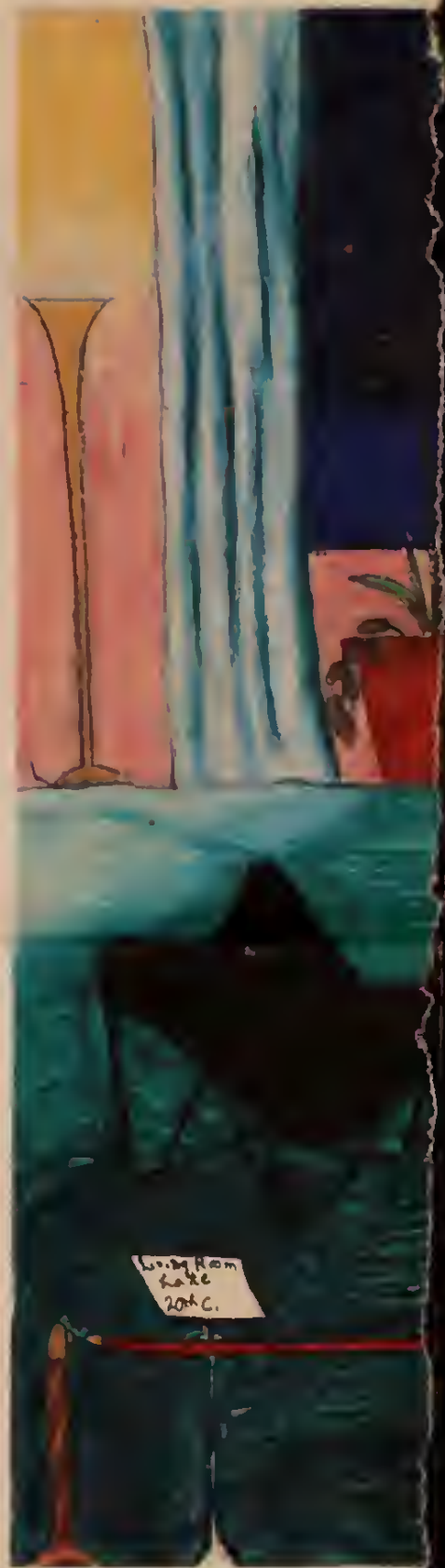
Every time I walk from the bedroom or the study to the kitchen I pass the living room and take a long, fond look at it. It's a lovely room. It might as well be one of those rooms in Bloomingdale's with a velvet rope in front of it for all the good it does me.

When I was growing up, I had a friend named Lillian who had no living-room furniture. She lived in a large house in Beverly Hills, and the living room was empty. I always wondered why. I always supposed it was because her mother was having trouble deciding on a color scheme. Color schemes were important in those days. I had a friend name Arlene whose house was famous for having a color scheme in every room, including the breakfast nook, which was charcoal gray and pink. Anyway, a few years ago, Lillian was in New York and I finally got up the nerve to ask her why her family had never had any living-room furniture. She told me that her father had given her mother a choice of living-room furniture or a pool, and her mother had chosen the pool. I salute my friend Lillian's mother. She obviously understood something that I am still having trouble absorbing, which is this: at least you can swim in a pool.

But what can you do in a living room? Tell me. I really want to know. I know what to do in a charcoal gray and pink breakfast nook, but the only thing I can think of to do in a living room is living, and I clearly don't have a clue as to what that consists of, especially if you rule out eating, sleeping, working and swimming. I'm sure that some people are good at it, whatever it is. They probably lie around in a marginally useful way. They probably contemplate life. They probably have servants and drinks before dinner and linen cocktail napkins that someone irons. They probably think of themselves as civilized. I understand that my living room is part of a long historic tradition — no one sat in the Victorian parlor either — but that does not in any way make me feel better about its enduring emptiness.

My living room sits in my apartment, a silent snobbish presence, secretly contemptuous that I don't know what to do with a room that has no clear function. I'm sure it wishes I were more imaginative; I'm positive it hopes that some day I will grow up and spend a little time in it. And some day I will. Some day when I am very old. By that time I will be no good at all at eating, sleeping, working and swimming, but I won't mind, because I will finally have found a use for the living room. It is obviously the perfect place to die. ■

Nora Ephron, the author of "Heartburn," lives in New York City.



An nun carries a wreath to an old wooden silo that the community converted into a shop, where at Christmas time the nuns offer for sale handmade gifts of pottery, shawls and rugs, herb teas, jams and jellies, soaps and cologne. The items are crafted by the nuns, mostly from raw materials grown and gathered on the monastery grounds.

Their worship is much as it was for Benedictine nuns centuries ago. They rise at 2 A.M., sing the Gregorian chant in Latin and live a cloistered life out of public view. "Why should we abandon the Latin?" asks Mother Agnes. "Each time we come to choir, it reminds us that we're in the stream of 1,500 years of monastic life."



The excitement of Christmas fills a Benedictine monastery.

CHRISTMAS, AND THE FOUR WEEKS OF ADVENT PRECEDING THIS great feast are infused with special meaning at the Abbey of Regina Laudis. For it was in a town called Bethlehem, nestled in the rolling hills of Connecticut, that a handful of Benedictine nuns found a new home after traveling from a war-ravaged France 40 years ago. During the weeks of Advent, these cloistered nuns have relived the Old Testament longing for a Messiah, crying out in the ancient words of the Psalms. Now, as they approach Christmas Day, there is a special excitement in their prayers, which rise to heaven eight times a day. "We know Christ will come, and in a new, fresh way each year," says Mother Placid. "It is not the historical Christ we beckon, but a Saviour who wants to be with us in the darkness and despair of the moment, alive in the circumstances of our day for everyone." Much of their preparation may be internal, but like families everywhere, they will have a Christmas tree. Each year the tree is decorated to symbolize the spirit of the community of nuns and is lit for the first time on Christmas Eve, at the beginning of the four-hour service, which includes matins and midnight mass, that inaugurates the holiday commemorating the birth of Christ. Visitors are welcome to worship with the cloistered nuns, but on the other side of the wooden grille in the abbey's chapel. They do not exchange Christmas presents among themselves, but the nuns do make gift items, which are sold to help provide for the monastery's material needs. It is Mother Jerome's hope that "a little bit of Regina Laudis and the life we pursue goes along with them at Christmas time." — PAUL WILKES

WELCOMING THE HOLY SEASON



The Benedictine nuns at the Abbey of Regina Laudis live the monastic life of prayer and work in its purest form, raising the food they eat, even crafting the earthenware for their refectory table. Like a shepherd of old, Mother Ruth (above) tends a flock of sheep whose wool the nuns shear, dye, spin and weave into cloth.

Other orders have abandoned traditional attire, but the 46 nuns of Regina Laudis, including Mother Jerome (below left), and Mother Ruth, have adhered to their old habits, with veils of black or white. The appeal of the community of nuns is so great that there is a waiting list of women wanting to join them in their cloistered life.





ALEX WEBB, MAGNUM

By Dan Wakefield

JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS OF 1980, I WAS SITTING IN THE Sevens, a neighborhood bar on Beacon Hill (don't all these stories of revelation begin in bars?), when a housepainter named Tony remarked out of the blue that he wanted to find a place to go to mass on Christmas Eve. I didn't say anything, but a thought came into my mind, as swift and unexpected as it was unfamiliar: *I'd like to do that, too.*

I had not gone to church since leaving my boyhood Protestant faith as a rebellious Columbia College intellectual more than a quarter-century before, yet I found myself that Christmas Eve in King's Chapel, which I finally selected from the ads on The Boston Globe religion page because it seemed least threatening.

Dan Wakefield is a novelist, journalist and screenwriter.

It was Unitarian, I knew the minister slightly as a neighbor, and I assumed "Candlelight Service" meant nothing more religiously challenging than carol singing.

As it happened, the Rev. Carl Scovel gave a sermon about "the latecomers" to the church on a text from an Evelyn Waugh novel called "Helena." I slunk down in my pew, literally beginning to shiver from what I thought was only embarrassment at feeling singled out for personal attention, and discomfort at being in alien surroundings. It turned out that I had a temperature of 102 that kept me in bed for three days with a violent case of the flu and a fearful suspicion that church was a very dangerous place, at least if you weren't used to it.

"Perhaps my flesh was rebelling against this unaccustomed intrusion of spirit. Certainly going to church was out of character for me. My chosen public image was the jacket photo of "Starting Over," my novel about a divorced (Continued on Page 22)

Worshippers taking part in a multid denominational candlelight service in St. Peter's, a Lutheran church on Manhattan's East Side.

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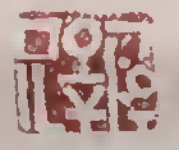


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Written by Mr. Kim, Choong Hyun

**“Ye shall know the truth, and
the truth shall make you free”**

St. John 8: 32